

Apani Dhani Ecolodge

- Advice for travellers –



It is advisable to acquire a certain basic knowledge about India before your journey. It will allow you to have a better understanding of the country and its culture and will enable you to adapt easily to new surroundings.

India requires more tact and precautions than other countries. Indians are often more sensitive than Westerners and can be hurt easily by lack of courtesy or regard. But they respond to a friendly and respectful attitude with generosity and hospitality.

Help us to promote responsible tourism in a country where mass tourism has already left so many negative marks. Let tourism be an exchange of culture and not merely a matter of money and recreation.

If you intend to stay at Apani Dhani "Eco-lodge" and take part in our excursions or activities, we would ask you to respect the following advice. Your contacts with locals will be much easier.

1. Respect of the host community and its culture

Rajasthan is a rural state where 70% of the population is still engaged in agriculture and livestock rearing. The customs and way of living in our state, especially in our area, remain very traditional.

- **Do not offend by your manner of dress.**

Indians give a great importance to the appearance of someone and to his or her way of dressing. It will entail the respect they have to lavish. In Northern India, showing legs and shoulders is considered bad. Dress yourself in such a way that most of your body is covered. Do not put on sleeveless tee-shirts, shorts or bermudas (even for men), or transparent or revealing clothes such as leggings. Ladies should always wear a long tee-shirt or shirt to cover their buttocks and absolutely avoid the "bra-less" look.

- **Do not distribute sweets, pen, money, shampoo samples (the list is not exhaustive)** even though you may be asked to do so. **Never give money in exchange for a photograph.** Let us protect the authenticity of a spontaneous contact and the frankness of a smile. In some tourist places, an increasing number of children refuse to go to school (or the parents refuse to send them) thinking it is useless to go to school when they can earn more money in one or two hours than their father during a whole day of hard work. Some teenagers could even turn aggressive if they do not get what they ask. If you wish to give away something, you may do so through some organizations or development projects.
- **Mind your behaviour with your partner, if you travel as a couple.** Intimate relations in India remain discreet. Do not embrace, kiss or hold hands with your partner in public. People will be shocked.
- As far as photography is concerned, kindly keep in mind, however exotic or colourful a scene might be, that **we do not organize "photo-safaris."** Even though Indians most of the time like to be photographed, we ask you to take the time to appreciate the human contacts our tours or excursions enable you to have before even taking your camera out. At certain occasions, one should absolutely refrain taking photographs as at a death ceremony, religious act, baths or a scene of misery.
- In India, a lot of social rules might differ from yours (wedding, religion etc). Try to get information without judging, without taking the Western model as the only reference. You will get more out of your trip.
- In India, services, hygiene, punctuality and notion of time are rather different than what you are used to in your country. Try not to compare it with yours. Take it all with light humour.
- The majority of Indians are living below the poverty line but even the poorest of them still have their sense of dignity and self-respect. Always take that into consideration.
- At Apani Dhani, the meals will be strictly vegetarian. We would ask you to respect this tradition and not to drink alcohol at such places. Of course elsewhere, in hotels and restaurants, you can get non-vegetarian food as well as alcoholic beverages if you wish to.

2. Respect of the Environment

While travelling in Rajasthan, keep in mind that water and electricity are always insufficient. Avoid wasting them.

Rajasthan is a semi-arid zone. The average annual rainfall in this state is 60 cm compared to 110 cm in India.

In Shekhawati, our area, it is even less, only 25 cm. The waterbed is more than 80 meters deep and dangerously recedes by one meter per year.

- **Through traditional Indian way of bathing (bucket and mug), the villagers use a mere 15 liters of water per person per bath.**

1. They first wet themselves, taking water from the bucket with the mug.
2. Then, they apply soap on their bodies.
3. Finally, they rinse themselves by taking again water with the mug.

In all cases, the water in the bucket remains clean and if any is left, it can be used for other purposes.

Taking a shower with running water requires 2 to 3 times more. Therefore, whenever is possible, prefer the traditional "Indian bath".

- Carefully close the taps. Inform the host of any dripping in your bathroom.
- Avoid using a new towel or bed sheets every day.
- You may take a water bottle with you so that you can minimize the amount of plastic bottles bought (2 liters plastic bottle can be found in the market.)
- Kindly turn off all the lights in your room before going out.
- Refuse plastic bags in the shops whenever possible.
- While preparing your luggage at home, take care to remove all plastic wrappings. Do not bring them to the Indian countryside where recycling does not exist.
- Be respectful of the local environment. Do not leave non-biodegradable litter behind. Kindly leave the different places you go to as clean as they were before your arrival. For instance, Indians do not use toilet paper (they wash themselves). In nature, think of burning or burying yours.

3. Support to Local Economy

- Buy handicraft directly from local artisans or cooperatives. Numerous things are available on the spot like biscuits, sweets, cigarettes etc.
- Do not hesitate to have clothes made in India. We have wonderful fabrics and good tailors
- Collect information on reliable development projects or associations working for the host community

Some Points To Know About Indian Life

- In Northern India Indians greet each other by joining their hands together, bowing a bit forward and saying, "Namaste."

Do not shake hand, especially with teenagers, even though they may ask. They sometimes take it for an ambiguous and exciting game, especially with foreign ladies; the contact between young men and woman being prohibited before marriage

- One should neither touch someone with the feet nor place his or her sole towards the representation of a deity or towards a person. It is taken as highly insulting.
- Indians eat only with the right hand and with the fingers (the left hand is treated as impure and reserved for other uses.) Always rinse your hands before your meals.
- If you eat with a family, never enter the kitchen until and unless you are invited to do so. Never walk into kitchen or Parinda (place to keep drinking water) with your shoes on. In the other part of the house, see if the host is keeping his shoes on or not. You may do the same.
- During the stays with families, it is preferable that you do not touch the pots in terra cotta kept for water. Ask your host to serve you in case you need some. Since you may not grasp the Indian notion of purity, you may offend your host.
- Indian women usually do not smoke and certainly not in public, especially in rural India.

- Outside the family circle and especially in rural India, the contacts among people are established on men to men or women to women basis. As far as possible try to respect this custom.

These traditions might be difficult for you to understand. Do not hesitate to ask us for further explanation if you wish. We will our best to help you towards a better understanding of our culture.

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